566 land fiefs in conquered territory, and he was, as special
463 favor, permitted to wear the long cotton shirt, "qämis"
under the common shamma (toga), and over the old style nar-
[292] rowing kneepants; cotton jodphurs and sandals remained the
prerogative of feudal lords. Most of the skilled crafts-
men never rose that high but spent their lives accompany-
ing troops as tentmakers, carpenters, smiths, horn cup
fashioners, tanners, or, at best, as silversmiths and em-
broiderers of harness and saddle coverings for feudal chiefs.

181 The material culture of the Amhara(still continuing
183 among the rural Amhara) is therefore a composite of the
566 equipment of the settled peasant and of the formerly itiner-
176 ant feudal lord and his troop of soldier-retainers and
specialists (many of the latter from socially inferior eth-
[754] nic groups). Moreover, the settled peasant feared not only
the actual "evil eye" of the rapacious warlord, but also
the spiritually conceived"evil eye". Both factors undoub-
tedly contributed to the conservatism and the pattern of
maximum utilization of natural products with a minimum of
invention; leaving the exercise of ingenuity for other
elaborations of culture.

1. Living Standards

A. The Rural Settlement:

●621 The typical residential unit is the hamlet ("tis", or,
if several on one large hill, "mändär"), rather than a vil-
lage. The hamlet may consist of from two to a dozen huts,
with the mode about five residential huts ("tuqul"). Thus
the hamlet is often little more than an isolated or a semi-
isolated farmstead, though another hamlet may occupy the
other side of the same hill.

361 tornadoes in the rainy season, is another ecological consideration.

591 [621] The hamlet is always a kinship unit, usually patrilocal and patrilineal. When a young man marries, his father will give him a cow or two, as he will to his daughter. But only the son will receive the use of part of his father's rented (or owned) fields to support his new family. Thus he will usually build his hut near his father's, father's brother's, and paternal grandfather's. In exceptional cases, when no land is available at his father's, the bridegroom may agree to establish himself at his wife's hamlet, but this is rare since the feeling is that he will always remain a subjugated, barely tolerated, henpecked and ill-treated figure. A proud Amhara male, even a "gabbar" (peasant ex-serf), would not agree to such a condition and insists on patriarchal status at least within his own biological family of creation. He would much rather continue [606] to obey his father than his new father-in-law. Consanguinal kinship feelings are so strong that it is a common assumption that no in-law could really mean well and be unselfishly well-disposed to the newcomer. Only when warfare has killed off the adult males in a hamlet, male inlaws move in.

592 Each hut is inhabited by a biological family, usually father and mother, about three children who have survived infant mortality, and perhaps an aged parent or old, widowed kinswoman of the husband's.

602 Patrilineal kinship relations are often related also to administrative considerations. On church-owned land, the peasants who live on the hillside below the church, who

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

804 night. And if it is distant they say, you will arrive in a *sambete*, that is a week, and so they define it according to the distances. When I said that from Barua to Barra there 484 were from three and a half up to four leagues, that was according to our opinion, and it would not be more. We afterwards travelled there many times, and we started from one town and dined at the other, and did our business and returned to the town we had started from by daylight. The people of the country reckon this as a day's journey, because they travel very slowly. Between these two towns [241] there is very remarkable country, tilled fields of wheat, barley, millet, pulse, lentils, and all other sorts of vegetables which the country possesses unknown to us. From the [361] road from one place to the other more than fifty towns are to be seen: I say large towns and very good ones, all on 224 heights. In these plains and fields there are herds of wild cattle, forty or fifty in a herd. It is a chase that is very pleasant for the Portuguese, but the country people are able to do them little hurt, although they receive from them much injury to their crops.

CAP. XX.—*Of the town of Barua, and of the women and their traffic, and of the marriages which are made outside of the churches.*

621 This town of Barua in which we were staying, and where later we passed more time, may have three hundred hearths and more, a great part of them belonging to women, because this is like a court in many respects. One is that people of the Prester's court never go from here, and as many as come are not without wives. The other is because this is the residence and seat of the Barnagais, and there are continually in his house three hundred mounted men and upwards, and as many more who come every day for

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

business of petitions, and few are without wives. This causes many single women to live here, and when they are old they have another resource, for in this town every Tuesday there is a great market or fair at which three or four hundred persons are brought together; and all the old women and some young ones have measures to measure wheat and salt, and they go to the market to measure and gain their living; they give hospitality to those that sleep there that day, and also take care for them of what remains to be sold for the next market day. There is another reason why there are many women in this town, it is because the men who have plenty of food to eat keep two or three wives; and this is not forbidden to them by the King nor by their magistrates, only by the Church. Every man who has more than one wife does not enter the church, nor does he receive any sacrament: and they hold him to be excommunicated. For a year and a half a nephew of mine and I lodged in the house of a man named Ababitay, and he had three wives still alive and acquaintances of ours, friends in honourable friendship: they said that he had had seven wives and thirty children of them. Nobody forbade them, except the Church, as has been said, which did not give them the benefit of the sacraments; and before our departure, he put away from him, and from intercourse with him, two wives, and remained with one, that is to say, the one he had last, who was the youngest, and already they gave him the sacraments, and he entered the church like anybody else, and as though he had not had more than one wife. On this account there are many women in this town, because the men are well off and are like courtiers: and they take two or three, or more if it pleases them. In this country marriages are not fixed, because they separate for any cause. I saw people married, and was at a marriage which was not in a church, and it was done in this manner. On the open space before some houses they placed a bed-

621 443 595 688 [586] 585

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

643 he had, since he was Arraz of the Chaufas, that is, head or
701 captain of the men at arms, was to go about like a man at
631 arms. In the fashion that he went, there followed behind him twenty or thirty men with spears and bucklers, so that he goes about the court like a provost with his men. I knew another Arraz Tagale, and Arraz Jacob, lords of large lands, and many other Xuums, lords of lands, but without titles. Thus the Barnagais is the lord of many
643 lords, and of many lands and people, and so he and all
631 these lords that have been mentioned are subject to the
65 Prester John, and he removes and appoints them as he
439 pleases: so they pay to him large dues. As all these lords and their lordships are on the side of Egypt and Arabia, from whence come the good horses, and the brocades and the silks, they pay in these same goods: that is to say, horses, brocades, and other silks. They come to the Barnagais with all these dues, and the Barnagais to Prester John, and pays for himself and for the others, in each year, a hundred and fifty horses; as to the brocades and silks, it cannot be known how much they amount to, only I heard say that they were many; I also heard that they pay a large sum of cotton cloths from India for the customs which they levy in the port of Arquiqno.

CAP. XXV.—*Of their method of guarding their herds from wild beasts, and how there are two winters in this country: and of two churches that are in the town of Barua.*

● [621] The settlement of this town of Barua and of those
231 adjoining it, is this. There are ten, twelve, or fifteen houses, and one walled and closed yard, served by a gate: in this yard they shut up their domestic cows which they use for their milk and butter, and also small flocks, and mules and asses. They keep the gate well fastened, and a great fire,

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Abegue*, an Emperor. [2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

own. The soldier was generally freed from all taxes except the tithe and this might be excused where he provided his own horse and weapons.

Not only was there great variety in the arrangements but they were by no means static even in the conservative north. An example of this may be given from Gojjam. Here under Ras Hailu and his father, the *Negus* Tekla Haimanot, the soldiers were simply local men who, being exempted from tithes and other dues to the government, cultivated their own land and did three months' service a year at the governor's headquarters. After Ras Hailu's rebellion and his deposition in 1932 on grounds of misrule, Ras Imru, the Emperor's kinsman, was sent in his place. Although he was said to be a much more enlightened governor, the people murmured because he brought with him his 'foreign' Shoan army which oppressed the *gabars* who had to support it. This is an example of how, in the face of the complexities of the social situation, an ostensibly reforming measure might be frustrated.

PRIVATE TENURE

The main forces by which land and tribute were held by what may be called the public elements of the national life of Ethiopia, the Emperor, the church, the governor and his assistants, and the soldiers, have been very briefly indicated. The picture, even in this outline form, would not be complete without some reference to tenure by private persons, especially by those small farmers and peasant cultivators by whose work the rest were nourished.

The position of the *gabar* has been defined in relation to the rest of the community. When, in the northern provinces, we examine this class in their own right we find that it presented the most enduring strands in the texture of Ethiopian society and that its composition leads us back to the tribal past.

Over large parts of the northern provinces, especially those that were not too seriously disturbed or overlaid by Galla invasions, the land was held by groups of peasant holders, generally under the leadership of one or more families, and any inquiries about their origin would lead almost at once to romantic personal stories that may date, or appear to date, from some centuries before. These stories would explain how that group had come to be where it was and how its forefathers had first occupied the land.

These groups held by *rest*, that is, by hereditary right. They held as a group which had preserved some of the close ties of an original kinship group even though in the course of time it had absorbed many

7: Perham S-4 (no date) 1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

had been removed, leaving the heads of villages and districts in direct contact with the Italian resident.

Our third example comes from Eritrea. No excuse is needed for this excursion beyond the present borders of Ethiopia, since the Eritrean plateau was until fifty years ago a part, and one of the oldest parts, of the Ethiopian state, and this region may again revert to its former status. In addition, however, we have the great advantage that Dr. Nadel, an anthropologist of experience and authority, has had the opportunity in this region under the British military administration to make a thorough investigation of a land tenure closely resembling that of northern Ethiopia.[1]

On the Eritrean plateau the most characteristic unit was the *enda*, a number of families which claimed to have descended from a single ancestor. This group was not static; it might decline or be dispersed, or it might thrive and reach a size when it became necessary to break up and form new *endas*. It was not an administrative unit, but in certain matters it acted as a unity through meetings of its elders. The administrative unit, the village, generally covered several *endas*, though these may have all descended from a parent *enda*. The village unit might also cut across *endas*.

Above the village administrations, in the days before the Italian conquest, came the hierarchy of the Emperor, his governors and deputy governors. These were often strangers from the south though local chiefs might be promoted to imperial positions. The imperial taxation had to be delivered to these officers, and the Emperor might arbitrarily cut out estates in *gult* for their support, or for that of monasteries or colonies of soldiers posted in these outlying regions to support the Emperor's power.

These rights may be regarded as extraneous to the underlying customary tenures which are divided by Dr. Nadel into three, ownership by the individual (which generally meant the individual family); by the kindred, or *enda*, and by the village. The first two types of ownership might, owing to the blurring of the edges between the three groups by growth or decline, shade off into each other.

In his discussion of family ownership Dr. Nadel gives us an authoritative definition of *resti*, which may cover ownership ranging from that of an individual to that of a large kinship group. This tenure was held by the people to be the most fundamental and sacred, and its characteristics were firstly its relative absoluteness; secondly its hereditary nature,

[1] Nadel, S. F., 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', *Africa*, vol. 16, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 1–22, 99–109. The succeeding pages are closely based on this concise report.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[3]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[4]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rist*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

impressions conveyed by much of the literature on Ethiopia, is not a normal ecological unit in Amhara society.

Each homestead gives the appearance of self-sufficiency and autonomy, but it is bound to a wider social context in a number of ways. While satisfying most of its consumption needs by its own efforts, every household depends on the market for certain items. The highland peasants must go to market for their chili, onions, peppers, hops, and cotton; while lowland peasants must barter for barley and sheep there. Salt and foreign fabrics must be imported from afar, and iron and clay products must be bought from specialists who bring their wares. Limited needs for currency—chiefly for rifles and, since 1942, taxes—are also met at the market.

The markets normally are held once a week. Every homestead is within walking distance of at least one market; though often the trip may take several hours, at times the greater part of a day. Markets in the same region are often scheduled on different days, so that, for example, the family which misses the one five hours to the north on Saturday can catch another four hours to the south on Tuesday. The virtual absence of roads throughout the countryside makes travel to market slow and tedious, but wealthier peasants nonetheless manage to transport quantities of grain and livestock to the provincial capitals for better prices and a wider selection of consumers' goods.

The household is linked to a wider world politically as well as economically. By providing tithes, revenues, military service, and corvée labor, the peasant has traditionally been obliged to support an extensive political hierarchy. In return for this he has received an organization for defending the country against enemies, and a structure of legitimate authority sufficient to maintain order and settle disputes.

The peasant's relations with this political hierarchy have been mediated by the office of *chīqā shum*, a district headman. This office is circulated, usually annually, among a small number of men whose eligibility is based on their ownership of certain pieces of land. As the land passes from father to son, so does the eligibility for being *chīqā shum*.

Traditionally the *chīqā shum* was a role of considerable importance. It carried the duties of tax collection, adjudication, promulgation of official decrees, supervision of occasional work projects, levying of men for military service, and officiating at civil marriages and divorces. Through his work the *chīqā shum* received a variety of fees and bribes. In cases of flagrant misbehavior the local people were able to dismiss him from office. The reorganization of provincial administration since 1942 has deprived the *chīqā shum* of many of his former powers, but the office still exists and plays a modest role in peasant life.

The district over which a *chīqā shum* has authority is the closest thing to a village unit among the Amhara. It is usually coterminous with the area sur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate
621 term for it than village. The *chīqā shum* and the local church authorities
794 work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and
79 the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to
182 mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chīqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

*565 ### *The Daily Round*
512

Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maid-
[462] servant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels
[252] her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *ṭēff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock
[782] become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education,
[231] by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes
[462] the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

[372] One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room
[262] with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm
[252] up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay
[352] bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash
[515] his hands, and *ǐnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by him-
[264] self, slowly, pondering the work for the day.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 181 186 619 *Landsmann*) regularly evokes considerable sentiment. There is also a strong sense of solidarity based on the use of Amharic—both among the Amhara as a whole vis-à-vis other Ethiopians who either do not know Amharic or speak it imperfectly, and among regional dialect groups. The people of Gojjam and of the Gondar area are particularly chauvinistic with regard to the quality of their Amharic.

*121 181 621 This attachment to symbols of religion, territory, and language is important in providing a basis for identity and morale. Yet these attachments are of relatively little import in shaping a self-transcending orientation in the day-to-day activities of the Amhara; for the crucial context of these activities is the local community, and in the civic sphere the Amhara manifest very little solidarity. Indeed, it may be said that the Amhara have virtually no sense of "community" at all, for the concept can scarcely be rendered in idiomatic Amharic.

*121 181 361 621 The absence of community sentiment among the Amhara is implied by their ecology. Not only did the Amhara fail to produce extensive and durable urban centers (with the limited exception of Gondar) but their country is even barren of that frequent cornerstone of peasant life, the village. The Amhara have distributed themselves thinly, scattering in groups of fours and fives up and down their mountains and plateaus. Larger aggregations are found on the estates of noblemen, but these constitute expanded private households rather than civic communities. The Amhara justify this dispersion of their population on the grounds that wide spaces are needed for the grazing of livestock and that a man needs to live on the land he farms. But herding and farming have been carried out well enough elsewhere by people living together in villages, and it is quite probable that this ecological pattern is due as much as anything else to the Amhara's preference for not having too much association with those outside his immediate kin group. In his own words, the Amhara prefers the kind of neighbor who "does not push the boundaries" (*wassan aynakām*), and believes, as noted earlier, that *bēt-ennā māqbar labetchāw naw* ("home and the grave are by oneself"). It is a preference manifest in such solitary living arrangements as that of divorced women who sometimes live by themselves in the country, eking out a living by spinning cotton or brewing spirits, and in the age-old predilection of Abyssinian monks for anchoritism.

*121 181 156 157 The moral counterpart of this ecological pattern is a preoccupation with private interests that leaves little room for the consideration of communal needs. According to the Amhara vocabulary of motives, social action is motivated first and foremost by the pursuit of *fīqem*, or narrowly conceived self-interest.[9] This matter-of-fact acceptance of egoistic motivation among the Amhara appears during what is a common occurrence: the shameless subversion of occasions which are set up to consider communal problems and to

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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PREFACE

This dissertation describes the medical beliefs and practices of an Amhara population of northwestern Ethiopia. The field research upon which it is based was conducted from January to December, 1966, in the highland area of Begemder province that extends from Gorgora, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, to Debark, overlooking the Takassie valley (see Map 3). This region is occupied by four ethnic groups, the Amhara, Abyssinian Muslims, Falasha (Abyssinian Jews), and Agaw (former pagans). All are racially indistinguishable from one another, and speak a common language, Amharic. North of the Takassie River live the Tigre, a people closely related to the Amhara and, like the latter, Coptic Christians.

The Amhara, who are the most numerous of Begemder's peoples, also inhabit much of the highland plateau extending to the south, into Gojam and Shoa provinces, and to the east, into Wollo province. Most Amhara are rural folk who practice a mixed agricultural economy, gorwing grains and pulses; raising sheep, goats, and cattle. The Amhara countryside is divided into parishes. A parish is composed of several hamlets whose residents live on dispersed homesteads, and share important social and economic ties through their parish's church. In addition to these rural folk, Amhara constitute a majority among the townspeople of highland Begemder.

bar maids.

A third, numerically significant minority have come from the provinces of Wollo to the east, and from Shoa and those areas still farther south. Local Amhara classify them together pejoratively as "Galla"[18], even though many are in fact true Amhara. Although these "Galla" vary as to physical type, most are indistinguishable from local Amhara, and only a minority are markedly negroid. Most are Copts or Muslims, although a few are non-Coptic Christians. Most of the men are government employees, generally members of the provincial gendarmerie, which is headquartered in Gondar.

Three additional, numerically small, populations also reside in Gondar. The Agaw are represented mainly by girls and women working as servants for the less affluent townsfolk, and as beer sellers. Of the Nilotes living here, the women work as servants for poor townsfolk, and both sexes haul wood from distant areas for sale in the town's daily wood market (sir gabiya). The very few Falasha in Gondar are iron-mongers.

Ward and Town. Gondar's residents divide the town

[18] The predominant ethnic group of southern Ethiopia, and, to Gondari Amhara, half-pagan and negroid ("bariya").

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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632
621 into sixty-five named wards (sebekas). The social and demographic character of wards varies considerably, and it is useful to describe them in terms of two contrasting types. At one extreme, the ward resembles a kind
[241] of urban parish. It contains an eponymous Church; and
[423] a majority of residents are ristenas, members of land-owning ambilineages who support themselves by farming and renting homesteads on their lands. But even these wards contrast with rural parishes on several counts.
[892] The ward is generally compact in size, and internally
[463] undivided beyond the homestead (bet). Within it live out-landers who work outside the ward in exclusively non-agricultural occupations. Further, while the parish is administered in detail by residents, the ward relies upon non-resident agents of the municipality for its administration.

At the other extreme, are the town's "non-corporate"
[648] wards. During the Italian occupation, several of
[175] Gondar's parish-like wards were sequestered by the invaders as building sites. After liberation, the Imperial government divided each of these wards into tracts, which were deliniated according to the buildings upon them. Tracts were then given as grants (yaribena mariet, "hero's land") to supporters of the government-in-exile, who were often non-residents of Gondar. In time, the pre-war boundaries of such wards were no longer regarded

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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621 relevant by townsfolk, and tracts, alone or in combination, came to be redesignated as "ward". Typically, the non-corporate wards encompass no agricultural lands, and includes no church within its boundaries. None of its resident families are ristenas or even related to one another, and each tends to associate itself with a church [779] according to cirteria other than residence. Indeed, in some, Muslims occupy homesteads within an otherwise Christian ward.

Most of Gondar's wards are today without any corporate identity, and serve simply as convenient place names or as occasional indicators of affluence and occupation. Although the meaning of many ward names is forgotten now, the names of others remain appropriately descriptive. Some denote the residents' occupation; [192] (the "place of the superior beer", "encoye mosk", which is occupied by beer houses). Others retain the name of an eponymic church (as in Rufael sebeka).

Non-corporate wards are not a recent innovation. From its founding in the seventeenth century, Gondar has included such sebekas---given over to beer houses and mead halls, to liegemen and warriors, and to a variety of artisans. The last war and its aftermath have only extended such areas and have encouraged ristenas to build residences on their lands for out-landers unable to find housing elsewhere in town.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talia sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivators of timens and church lands (riym). During the [198] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [241] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibeñas, eight as wood cutters,

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two as talla sellers, and one each as mat seller, carpenter, day laborer, and pensioner.

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The practice of herbalist therapies in ward and town contrasts significantly with the situation in rural hamlet and parish. The relatively dense population of the town has important consequences. In the countryside, the closest herbalist needed for a specific episode may be a day's walk from the client's home; in the town several may be found within an hour's walk. The increase in herbalist therapies is not directly proportional to the increased population of town over countryside, however.

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In Gabrael sebeka, for example, only eighteen households (41% of the total) contain one or more herbalists. Many townfolk are forced to abstain from practicing herbalist therapies, because, as out-landers, they are unable or disinclined to locate needed botanicals. Also, significant numbers of townsfolk practice non-secular therapies, particularly as balazars.

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Further, although there are more redundant herbalist therapies potentially available to the townsman, he remains ignorant of many of them. The peasant locates himself within a network of several core kinsmen and neighbors upon whom he depends for information regarding herbalist chains. The townsman finds his place in a social matrix in which kinship ties are greatly diluted by distance. In Gabrael sebeka, for example, thirty-two house-

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holds (73% of the total) are without kinship ties to any other of the ward's households. Although many of these residents have kinsmen in other parts of Gondar, few have more than one or two relatives in the town. In addition, because most townfolk rely upon non-agricultural employment for their subsistence needs, there is a concomitant disinterest in ambilineage fields. A consequence is a weakening of the important economic bonds which otherwise link kinsmen to one another.

Kinship ties are an important means by which the peasant acquires and communicates information necessary for constructing herbalist chains. Since almost every herbalist therapy of the rural parish enjoys its own "pedigree", or trans-generational reputation, the peasant herbalist is provided with means for 1) publicly validating his therapeutic claims, and 2) communicating the existence of the therapy to his potential clients. Potential clients frequently associate the ownership of a famous herbalist therapy with the members of a specific ambilineage, often identifiable by name. Both the ambilineage (whose identity is linked to its fields) and its medical reputation (which is tied to the ambilineage) are attached to a particular location. Since residence is most often viripatrilocal, the transmission of such therapeutic reputations is characterized by an agnatic bias. The male therapist moving to town, like

Literacy, per se, is not the goal of enrollment, but is perceived rather as a pre-requisite for studying the Gospels (wengel), the psalter (dawiyt), and a variety of prayers, pursuant to participating in the Mass (kidasiy) as an ecclesiastic of the parish.

Within a parish, only a minority of households send boys to the church school; these are generally ristenna households, each sending a single priest-candidate in any one generation. Because attendance at the school precludes shepherding, the common lot of young boys, the student's family must find a substitute shepherd for him; a younger sibling is usually available for this task, but, if not, a collateral or even non-kinsman may be obtained. Indeed, the age at which a boy begins his studies (generally, between seven and thirteen years) is often determined by when this substitute can be found. The parish school is suspended, however, during periods of intensive agricultural activities, of harvesting, threshing, and winnowing.

Although considerations of piety influence a man to seek ordination for his son, self-interest generally dominates. The achievement of priesthood validates a family's claims to church lands (yimoskol mariet). If the neophyte's father is himself a priest, his son's ordination means freedom from bothersome performances in the Mass. If the father is not a priest, but anyway

holds priest land because he is a ristеña of a founding ambilineage of the parish, his son's ordination means that the lands or payments until now turned over to a stranger priest (in lieu of a ristеña priest) can be kept within the family.

The durability of the ties which bind a priest to his natal parish are reinforced by his marriage. Most peasants are married in a "secular union" (yalunkurban migabat), which excludes neither divorce not extra-marital sexual adventures.[21] The priest, on the other hand, must be married, and it can be only as a "communion marriage" (bikurban migabat), an indissoluble sacrament of the Church which commits the spouses to sexual fidelity and forbids even remarriage. Thus, the priest is cut off from carousing in the talla houses of the town. He must instead confine his comraderie to the courtyard of the parish church, separated from the persons and experiences which might otherwise lead him away from his parish fields.

Thus enrollment in the parish school is conceived

[21] Two other forms of marriage, associated with a man on travels or living in town, are yidomoz migabat (which lasts for a contractual period) and yilijinat (providing only exclusive sexual rights to the woman).

as a means for diousing and strengthening a risteña family's economic and social interests within the parish. There are two conspicuous exceptions. Should a boy bear a physical disability so severe that he will be unable to perform the basic subsistence activities of Amhara men, particularly plowing, he may be enrolled in the parish school as a prelude to a non-agricultural career beyond his natal parish. The alternatives are few. Work as an artisan is appropriate for Muslim and Falasha, but shameful for an Amhara; while employment as a merchant is less objectionable, the peasant is generally without the necessary skills, contacts, and capital; military service is beyond his abilities; thus, only the Church and government remain. Regarding the Church, the priesthood is closed to him, since a priest must be physically whole, and capable of standing unassisted during the performance of the Mass. The remaining ecclesiastical and government career choices assume that a boy will achieve literacy at the parish school and subsequently depart from his natal community. The second exception to the local focus of the parish school, is the small number of boys who are offspring of debtera-teachers serving in parish churches. The ties of these men to their parishes-of-residence are usually only professional, and they are rarely risteñas, it is moreover their professional ethos which influences them to seek an extensive

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ecclesiastical education for their sons.

However, it is not only the cripple and blind, or the landless sons of full-time ecclesiastics who find in the parish school the means to leave the agricultural community. In reality, they constitute only a minority of the boys who leave the parish. For among those who are the physically-whole offspring of ristenas, there are some who find objectionable the prospect of a life-time as a farmer, subordinated to a father's wishes and interests, and bound to a single woman. Where such inchoate dissatisfaction exists, it may be further stimulated by the parish teacher, particularly if he is a debtera.

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The teaching at the parish school is performed by a local priest or monk[22] who is competent in the required subjects. In the absence of a suitable local man, a stranger monk or debtera is employed. The debtera is a Church scholar of sorts, who also leads the chanting of the liturgy during the performance of the Mass. He is an important model for the restive student, for his life provides an alternative and challenge to the social

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[22] A "monk" (manakwosa) is a mature unmarried deacon, a widowed priest, or a layman who has renounced material acquisitions and has vowed celibacy. Only the first two are literate and, therefore, potential teachers. There are, in addition, anchorites (bahatahwy).

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expectations that have gone unquestioned by other members of the boy's community. Significantly, the debtera is observed to enjoy a wide range of acquaintances beyond the peasants of the parish; he is a man known to have travelled throughout the northern highlands, to study at famous churches and monasteries, to visit great towns and markets. Beyond this, he is a man who has acquired power and prestige while free from the constraints of parental authority, as a member of an association of equals living beyond the bounds of the rigid status hierarchy of traditional Ethiopia.

For many students, it is the prospect of ending their studies rather than their wanderlust which they find discomforting. As a priest, a man is unlikely to progress in his knowledge of the liturgy and the scriptures, for he is neither likely to find a suitable teacher in his home region, nor are his agricultural, ecclesiastical and familial responsibilities likely to allow him the leisure to participate in such studies. What is more, the debtera-teacher, in casual remarks, paints the priesthood as a poor choice for the bright student; he is neither loath to comment upon what he considers priestly ignorance, nor is he reluctant to encourage his better students in the fulfillment of what he regards as their superior abilities.

The debtera provides a second service for the dis-

sident student by familiarizing him with the network of churches, monasteries, and academies which constitute the stations along which the student will progress once he leaves his natal parish.

[192] The completion of psalter (dawiyd) is frequently considered a sign of the student's readiness to be tested by the local bishop (abuna) for certification as a deacon. The boy is fifteen or sixteen by this time, and the recipient of church fields in return for his performance in the Mass; with his marriage a few years later, he becomes a priest. The boy bent on a debtera career generally waits until he has been certified a deacon, since this is considered a prerequisite for enrollment in his first debtera school.

With the exceptions already cited, a man is certain to oppose his son's departure, since, sentiment aside, the boy's move usually represents a significant economic loss. When he leaves his natal parish, he does so secretly, journeying to a distant debtera, in order to conceal his new residence from his father. Thus, he begins his debtera career without kinfolk or friends to protect him, without resources to meet his subsistence needs.[23]

[23] Since liberation, government (secular) schools have offered an alternative to an ecclesiastical education pursuant to government employment. The effects of this have been limited, however, since only an estimated 3% pass beyond the eighth grade (ESA 1965:198). In addition children of townsmen and non-Amhara are disproportionately represented in these classes.